

THE DEMOCRAT

"We claim as large a Charter as the Wind, to blow on whom we please."

By O. C. Dease.

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TERMS.

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From the Augusta, (Maine) Age. ORIGIN OF THE BRITISH CLAIM TO THE OREGON.

The systematic encroachments of the British Government upon the territorial rights of other nations, is a matter of universal notoriety. Scarcely a nation exists which has not at some time felt the insidious advances and grasping avarice of this nation for acquiring new territory. No sooner has that government fixed its eyes upon a territory or country which it finds desirable as an acquisition, than it sets upon some vague, indefinite pretence of claim to it, which it urges with all conceivable solemnity and perseverance, until it can extort an admission from its intended victim, that the territory thus claimed, is in dispute. From that moment, her success is certain. The title admitted to be in dispute, negotiation follows, in the progress of which, by bold assumptions on her part, and unguarded admissions on the part of her adversary, she succeeds in process of time in presenting a formidable array of facts and arguments in support of claims, which at the outset had not the slightest foundation on which to rest. This was the process by which Maine was robbed of her territory, and the process by which she now hopes to plant her power in Oregon.

Our title in the Oregon territory is too well known to our readers to require that we should now set it forth in detail. Suffice it to say, that from the year 1811 up to the time that the British broke up our settlement on the Columbia, during the last war, we were in open, peaceable and quiet possession of the country, and that up to that time, the British had never intimated to our government that they had the slightest pretence of a claim to the country. During the war an expedition was sent by the British against the American post at the mouth of the Columbia, which succeeded in capturing it and taking possession in the name of the British King. The possession was held by the British until after the close of the war. On the 15th of July 1815, Mr. Monroe, then Secretary of State, informed Mr. Baker, the British Charge d'Affaires at Washington, of the intention of our government to resume possession of this post under the first article of the treaty of Ghent, which stipulates for the mutual restitution of the territories and posts which each nation had wrested from the other during the war, at the same time requesting a letter from Mr. Baker to the commander of that post, directing him to yield it up to the jurisdiction of the United States.

To this note Mr. Monroe, Mr. Baker replied that he had no instructions from his government a relation to this matter, and referring him to Vice Admiral Dixon, in whose command the Pacific ocean is included, and a being in "possession of every necessary information in relation to this post." In his correspondence in which the restitution of the territory in question, is claimed as having belonged to us before the war, is a singular fact that the British Charge made no claim to the territory on the part of his government, but simply declined acting, on the ground of want of authority. This was in July, 1815.

During the year 1817, our government, sent the Sloop of War, Ontario, under the command of J. B. Prevost, to the Columbia, to take possession of this post according to the provisions of the treaty of Ghent. On the 26th of November, 1817, Chas. Bagot, the British Minister, then resident at Washington, in a note addressed to Mr. Adams, Secretary of State, expresses his regret that the Ontario should have been sent on its expedition without having first notified the British government. In this note, is presented for the first time a claim in behalf of that government, to the territory now unhappily in dispute. And we wish our readers to mark the foundation on which that claim was based. He says that from reports made by the Governor General of Canada, to Mr. Baker, it appeared that the post in question had not been captured during the late war, but that the Americans had retired from it, under an agreement made with the North-West Company, who had purchased their effects, and who had ever since retained peaceable possession.

"And thus appears that no claim for restitution of this post, can be grounded upon the first article of the treaty of Ghent, and as the territory itself was early taken possession of, in his Majesty's name, and has since been considered a part

of his Majesty's dominions, I have to request that you will furnish me with explanation of the object of the voyage of the Ontario, &c."

Here then is the first claim of title which the British had upon our government to Oregon, and this claim admitted the title of the United States before the war, and is based by the British Minister, upon the fact that the post was not captured during the war, but abandoned by the Americans, whose effects the North-West Company purchased. Thus resting the British claim entirely upon the fact of the abandonment of the post by the Americans and the subsequent possession of the country by the British. Subsequent acts of the British government show how much honesty there was in this, their first claim to this territory.

The Ontario proceeded on her voyage, and on the 6th of October the post at the mouth of the Columbia was formally surrendered by the British to the U. States, as appears by the following acts of surrender and acknowledgment.

"In obedience to the commands of his Royal Highness, the Prince Regent, signified by a despatch from the Right Honorable Earl Bathurst, addressed to the partners or agents of the North-West Company, bearing date 27th day of January, 1818; and in obedience to subsequent orders, dated on the 26th of July last; from William H. Sheriff, Esq., captain of his Majesty's ship Andromache, we the undersigned do, in conformity with the first article of the Treaty of Ghent, restore to the Government of the United States, through its Agent, J. B. Prevost, Esquire, the settlement of Fort George, on the river Columbia.

Given under our hands in triplicate, at Fort George, on the Columbia river, this 6th of October, 1818.

F. HICKEY,
Capt. of his Majesty's ship Blossom.
JAMES KEITH,
of the North-West Company.

"I do hereby acknowledge to have this day received, on behalf of the government of the United States, the possession of the settlement designated above, in conformity with the first article of the Treaty of Ghent.

Given under my hand, in triplicate at Fort George, Columbia river, this 6th of October, 1818.

J. B. PREVOST,
Agent for the United States.
Mr. Prevost in his despatch to the Secretary of State, dated October 11, 1818, in giving an account of this transaction, says:

"The British flag was thereupon lowered, and that of the United States hoisted in its stead, where it now waves in token, both of possession and sovereignty."

Thus much for the honesty of the claim made to Oregon by Mr. Bagot, on the ground that it had not been captured from the Americans, but abandoned by them. The pretence was so palpably false that even the British Ministry had not sufficient effrontery to maintain it, but by a solemn act of surrender "in conformity with the first article of the Treaty of Ghent," which provided only for the restitution of territory which one nation had captured from the other during the war, acknowledged our possession before the war, and their capture of the post.

The inquiry will naturally arise, how it should happen, that after the British claim to the territory had been proved so palpably false, by their own acts, and the "possession and sovereignty" of the country restored to the United States, the question of sovereignty or possession should afterwards have been drawn into dispute? It was accomplished in this manner. The North-west company had on the Columbia a large amount of property, consisting of furs, peltries and goods of European manufacture for the purpose of supplying those in their employment, and of trading with the natives. Being thus located, at a great distance from any British Post, Mr. Keith, the Agent of the company, requested that they might be permitted to remain and carry on the business under the flag of the United States. To this request, Mr. Prevost answered, that he had no authority to stipulate, but presumed our government would not compel them to leave the country without giving sufficient notice, to prevent loss. Thus were they permitted to remain in the territory, on mere sufferance, and without even a pretence of right.

In the mean time, the great value of the country became manifest to the British Ministry, although our Secretary of State, Mr. Adams, looked upon it as so "minute a question," as to be unworthy to be referred to the commissioners with the question of remuneration for a few miserable negroes which the British carried off during the war!

Accordingly, in 1822, we find the British Ministry again intimating to Mr. Adams, that they had claims to the territory, but with characteristic diplomatic tact, refusing to disclose the nature or foundation on which they were based. By pertinaciously insisting on these new, undefined and mysterious claims, our go-

vernment, which had not sagacity enough to perceive the value of the country, was subsequently induced to enter into that most suicidal arrangement for joint occupation, which has been continued for the last twenty years, and under which the British government has been enabled to magnify an occupancy, commencing in mere sufferance in 1818, without even a pretence of right, into a formidable claim, the settlement of which now threatens the peace of two of the most powerful nations of Christendom!

Such is the origin of the British claim to Oregon. Such is the result of the bold and shameless assumptions of her diplomacy, and the short sighted, and yielding policy of our own government. Had we done as the British would have done in similar circumstances, driven them out of the country when it was restored to us under the treaty, all subsequent trouble would have been avoided. But our government, with unsuspecting confidence, permitted them to remain, and the result is now seen. Every year of delay has added strength to their claim and emboldened their government in its unjust demands. Yet with these startling facts before us, there are not wanting those, among whom, we regret to say it, are to be found some professed democrats, who have so little American feeling, as to refuse to terminate this fatal joint occupancy, thus enabling them to fortify themselves under the claim of possession, in such a manner as to endanger the ultimate loss of this extensive, rich and invaluable territory! How long the American people will tolerate such remissness on the part of their government, remains to be seen.

The Secretary of State's reply to Almonte. The following is the reply of Mr. Buchanan, Secretary of State, to Almonte's Protest against the Annexation of Texas.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE.
Washington, March, 10, 1845.

The undersigned Secretary of State of the United States, has received the note of Gen. Almonte, the envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of the Mexican Republic, of the 6th inst., addressed to his predecessor, the Honorable John C. Calhoun, protesting, in the name of his government, against the resolution of the late Congress for annexing Texas to the United States, and he has submitted the same to the President.

In answer, the undersigned is instructed to say that the admission of Texas as one of the States of this Union, having received the sanction both of the legislative and executive departments of the government, it is now irrevocably decided, so far as the United States are concerned. Nothing but the refusal of Texas to ratify the terms and conditions on which her admission depends, can defeat his object. It is, therefore, too late at present to re-open a discussion which has already been exhausted, and again to prove that Texas has long since achieved her independence of Mexico, and now stands before the world as a free and independent State, as a sovereign and independent nation, and the family of nations. Sustaining this character, and having manifested a strong desire to be one of the members of our confederacy, neither Mexico nor any other nation will have just cause to complain against the United States for admitting her into the Union.

The President, nevertheless, regrets that the government of Mexico should have taken offence at these proceedings, and he earnestly trusts that it may hereafter be disposed to view them in a more favorable light. Whilst entering upon the duties of the presidential office, he cheerfully declares in advance, that his most strenuous efforts shall be devoted to the amicable adjustment of every cause of complaint between the two governments, and to the cultivation of the kindest and most friendly relations between the sister republics.

The undersigned has the honor to transmit to General Almonte his passport according to his request, and to assure him of his distinguished consideration and regard.

(Signed) JAMES BUCHANAN,
To the Brigadier General,
Don T. N. ALMONTE, &c. &c. &c.

THE VALUE OF THE CALIFORNIAS TO THE UNITED STATES.—Whilst it is not our policy to acquire new territory for the mere purposes of national glory, it does fall legitimately within the great objects of republicanism to extend the area of freedom, and diffuse the blessings of liberty and peace. This noble purpose, however, is to be accomplished by peaceful means, and with the voluntary consent of the inhabitants of the acquired territory. When such acquisitions can be thus made of contiguous territory which is essential to our national defence, the policy becomes obligatory upon us. Upon these principles the annexation of Texas was not only justifiable, but absolutely necessary for our national safety, and upon the same great considerations, the acquisition of the Californias will become the republican policy of our Government. To this point events are now rapidly tending, and sooner or later it will become the great question of the times.

A few facts well established will present the importance of this subject in its true light.

The only important harbors for our vessels from Cape Horn to the mouth of the Columbia river are the bays of San Diego and San Francisco. The British Government is so well apprised of the value of these harbors in the navigation of the Pacific ocean, that she has caused them both to be sounded at great expense. She has had the whole coast surveyed by cruizers. In 1840 she made overtures to Mexico for the Californias, and there are any doubts but that she would have

have been constantly prosecuted with an eye to the possession, if she had not already obtained a mortgage on them as indemnity for the debt of Mexico.

We need not stop to discuss the question whether our commerce could be safely and prosperously prosecuted on the Pacific, if the Californias with their harbors were in the possession of Great Britain. We sought the acquisition of Texas in order to secure to ourselves the command of the Gulf of Mexico—and it is more important, probably, that we should acquire the Californias in order to secure the harbors before referred to in the prosecution of our commerce on the Pacific. But with the evidences of the anxiety of Great Britain to obtain possession of this territory, which are well authenticated, our Government cannot fail to see the importance of preventing any such acquisitions by that power.

The last advices from California inform us that the province is in a state of revolution—the natives wishing to expel the Mexicans, and having every prospect of success. The struggle will be short, if it has not already terminated. We learn also that many of our citizens who emigrated to Oregon, having fallen down and settled in North California, and that they have found the most delightful climate and a rich soil. They affirm that Oregon is but a bleak, barren waste, compared with California. We refer to these facts to show that it is not at all unreasonable to suppose that California may be in a condition at a very early day to be annexed to our Union. [Nash Union.

SHIP CANAL TO THE PACIFIC.—A writer in the New Orleans Bulletin, signed "Cabot," appeals to the capitalists of that city in behalf of the project of a ship canal to the Pacific. It seems that the isthmus of Tehuantepec, Mexico, is the most favorable location. Here, the distance from ocean to ocean, is only one hundred and thirty miles. A scientific survey was made in 1842 and '43. The report says that, it was impossible to make a canal at Panama: very difficult at Nicaragua, and practicable and easy at Tehuantepec. The maximum cost of a canal at this latter point is estimated at about £3,500,000, and M. Moro thinks it could be completed at £2,500,000. The revenue to be derived from it must be immense. A distance of some twelve or thirteen thousand miles is saved to the vessels of our country trading with the Indies. We cordially agree with the writer that the subject is worthy of the serious attention of the American people. It is our decided opinion, however, that should the contemplated canal be made by foreign powers instead of the people or government of the particular country, it will be a source of endless dispute, and disaster.

From the Disseminator.

MR. EDITOR: As the period is approaching for the meeting of the State Convention, we owe it to ourselves to look about and see whether, among the numerous experienced and trustworthy, there can be found one more deserving confidence than our old and faithful Representative, Col. Roberts. But I am wrong in placing him in the list of aspirants, for it is well known that he was not an aspirant to a seat in Congress, but the honor was bestowed upon him without solicitation.

The surest test of merit is that which arises from long-tried experience, faithfulness in every place of trust, and success in the accomplishment of important measures. Now bring all the good patriots in the East, who are willing to sacrifice their own business to serve the good people—bring them, I say, to this test, and let us see if Col. Roberts will not be found a head and shoulders taller than any of them. And in order to make the test, it is not necessary to make any invidious distinctions, or to name other gentlemen.

A few interrogatories alone will suffice. Who was it that stood up most conspicuously from the East in support of the rights of the Chickasaw counties to representation in the Legislature in 1837 at the April and May sessions? R. W. Roberts.

Who introduced and effected the passage of an act to turnpike the Tuscaloosa, and thereby obtain a route for travelling and mail facilities through the Eastern counties? It was R. W. Roberts.

Who introduced and accomplished the passage of a bill in the Legislature to lay out a road from Jackson, Mississippi, through the eastern counties, to Tuscaloosa, Alabama? It was Col. Roberts.

By whose exertions was a resolution introduced and passed in the Legislature asking Congress to grant the two per cent fund to the State to construct a rail road from Brandon to the Alabama line? Col. Roberts.

When the grant was made, who introduced a bill into the Legislature to accept the fund in pursuance of the grant, and who accomplished its passage almost single-handed and alone against a most formidable opposition? It was Col. Roberts.

Who introduced a bill at the last session of Congress for a further grant of alternate sections of public land within five miles of the route of the contemplated rail road, for the purpose of aiding in the completion of this great national work? It was Col. Roberts.

Who has stood up to the Democratic party in tribulation and trial, in prosperity and adversity, without faltering one moment, for nearly forty years?

Mr. Editor, does not the name of Robert W. Roberts rise as a response to every one of these interrogatories?

Yes, and let me say to the planters of Mississippi, that this is the man whom a few ambitious aspirants are trying to rule off the congressional ticket to make way for themselves.

And what means are they using to effect their disinterested object? Why, they are riding through the eastern counties, drumming up their party hack and mercenary press, and thus are endeavoring to mislead

us proof of their talents, their integrity, their legislative capacity, or their devotion to Democratic principles and the institutions of our common country. Be represented in the Convention by your own delegates. Let it not be packed by party hacks, whose object is to promote their own selfish purposes, and not your own best interests. ONE OF THE PEOPLE.

POPULAR SENTIMENT.—A meeting of the citizens of Philadelphia has been called to express the sentiments of the people of that city on the Oregon question, and on the discussions which have recently been held in the British parliament on the same subject.

A Democratic meeting was held on the 30th April, at Wilmington, Delaware, which adopted resolutions of a strong character on the Oregon controversy—expressing perfect confidence in President Polk that he will conduct the negotiation on the part of the United States in such manner that "nothing will be asked but what is strictly right nor submitted to that is in the least wrong." Deprecating, in common with the whole people of the U. States, any act on the part of our Government, the injustice of which would involve us in war with a foreign power, the meeting insisted that, in the language of Mr. Polk, "our title to the country of Oregon is clear and unquestionable."

One of the resolutions declares, "that as republicans it becomes us to sustain the executive in the position which he has assumed; and believing that position to be correct, we trust he will adhere to the letter and spirit of his inaugural address."

"The last resolution puts the matter on the optional footing to Great Britain—if she chooses to adhere to the declaration of her ministers, parliament that the right of Oregon is in her, let the consequences and responsibility fall upon her own head. She will find," says the resolution, "that the American Eagle has just commenced his flight."

We like to hear of these meetings of the patriotic citizens of our country to express their opinions, and pledge themselves in disputes with foreign nations. They are redolent of good times—the times of '76 and 1812.

In the present controversy relative to Oregon, we rejoice to observe that with two or three exceptions of so insignificant a character to be unworthy of attention, the public journals of the United States have spoken the mild, but emphatic and patriotic language which at such a time and on such a question, is worthy of Americans. Every one recognizes the right of the United States to the territory claimed by England—every one sees that our government cannot surrender it without national disgrace, every citizen being parcel of the sovereign power, must necessarily participate. The country never was so ripe for war as at the present moment—and never so well prepared for it. The fortifications in some places are unmanned and defenceless, but at one week's notice they could be placed in a condition to bid defiance to all naval attack. We shall push this subject no further at this time, lest some one should say—you are wasting your breath in empty bravado—for we shall have no war. It is decidedly contrary to the interests of both countries not to remain at peace. So much the better. We are not for war if it can be avoided, without yielding to the arrogant and unfounded pretensions of Great Britain.

[N. A. Courier.

NEWSPAPER DEBTS.—The conduct of some men who call themselves honorable, in regard to debts of this description, is infamous. Means are sometimes resorted to for evading their payment, which are shameful. When a man, after regularly receiving the paper for years, pleads that he only intended to take it for one year, and will not pay for a longer time; and when another avails himself of the statute of limitations, in bar of a just claim, we feel disposed to gaze these bankrupts in integrity, and expose them to the scorn of honest people. There is no money more hardily earned than the subscription to newspapers, and it is a shame for any man, who is able, to hesitate to discharge his account when demanded.

[Raleigh Register.

THE FENCES.—The fences in Pennsylvania alone are valued at a million of dollars.